



DECEMBER 2012

THE HOLIDAY SEASON

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

Celebrate the Holidays L.A. Style

500 Musicians and Dancers Take the Stage at the 53rd Annual L.A. County Holiday Celebration

Los Angeles County is rich in cultural diversity—from dance to music, our communities are filled with a variety of talent. Every year, the County brings together many of these performers, representing the myriad of holiday traditions of Los Angeles, for an amazing show on stage. The admission to the L.A. County Holiday Celebration at the Music Center's Dorothy Chandler Pavilion is **FREE**.



Invertigo Dance Theatre

Now in its 53rd year, the Holiday Celebration is the region's biggest Emmy-nominated holiday show and a gift to the community from the Board of Supervisors. This annual event has become a tradition for many Angelenos who bring the whole family to experience choirs, music ensembles, and dance companies. The three-hour extravaganza, from **3 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Monday, December 24, 2012**, features 500 performers and is produced by the L.A. County Arts Commission.



This year's celebration combines returning favorites with exciting new additions including a newly-choreographed piece by **Invertigo Dance Theatre**; the blending of Mexican folk with Afro-Caribbean rhythms by **Las Cafeteras**; classical dance of southern India by **Shakti Dance Company**; a capella spiritual arrangements of holiday classics by the **Spirit Chorale of Los Angeles**; and traditional Filipino songs

celebrating the Christmas holiday from **Immaculate Heart of Mary Children's Choir**.

The Holiday Celebration is free to the public. No reservations or tickets are required. Seating is on a first come, first served basis so arrive early—festivities begin on the Music Center Plaza at 12:30 p.m. Doors to the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion open at 2:30 p.m. and the show starts promptly at 3 p.m. Parking underneath the Music Center is also free, or take the Metro and enjoy a pre-show walk through Grand Park, which will be hosting food trucks in the Olive Court area.

The Holiday Celebration is broadcast live on KCET TV and then rebroadcast from 8 to 11 p.m. It is simulcast on 90.7 FM KPFF and streamed live at www.kcet.org. Learn more at holidaycelebration.org, Facebook.com/LAHolidayCelebration or call (213) 972-3099.



Shakti Dance Company

Happy Holidays!

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

California Science Center
700 Exposition Boulevard, Los Angeles 90037
(323) 724-3623
www.californiasciencecenter.org

Ongoing – Space Shuttle Endeavour

Natural History Museum
900 Exposition Boulevard, Los Angeles 90007
(213) 763-DINO
www.nhm.org

Ongoing – Butterfly Brooch Collection

LACMA
5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles 90036
(323) 857-6010
www.lacma.org

Ongoing – Levitated Mass
Ongoing – Metropolis II

Center Theatre Group
www.centertheatregroup.org

Kirk Douglas Theatre
Through December 30 – Twist Your Dickens!

Ahmanson Theatre
Through January 6 – Anything Goes

Mark Taper Forum
Through January 6 – Other Desert Cities

Dorothy Chandler Pavilion
February 1 through February 3 – The Joffrey Ballet

Descanso Gardens
Through December 30 – Heritage Artists: Michael Humphries

Visit <http://hr.lacounty.gov>
for information on employment
opportunities with the
County of Los Angeles



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edited or otherwise altered for clarity.

Check out the DIGEST at

<http://dhrdcap.co.la.ca.us/jic/digest/>



“Santa’s Sleigh” Brings Holiday Cheer to Inglewood



Bringing holiday cheer to communities is a proud Los Angeles County Fire Department tradition, and one of the Department’s hallmark events is the annual “Santa’s Sleigh” parade held in the City of Inglewood.

Santa’s Sleigh is a hand-made prop in the shape of a huge sleigh and eight reindeer complete with holiday lighting and a sound system. It “flies” through the City atop a 30-foot trailer complete with a “working chimney,” giving the illusion of a real fire. Designed and built in 1996 by Fire Captain Scott Ross and his father, Sonny, Santa’s Sleigh has delighted residents every year with Santa handing out over 20,000 candy canes. “In Inglewood, these kids don’t have a whole lot,” Ross says. “Before 1996, we used to do the event with Santa on a reserve fire truck, but the kids could not talk to and really could not see Santa very well. So, we built this as a way for kids to actually be able to see and talk to Santa Claus.”

Ross, along with Fire Station 173 personnel, works with the City of Inglewood Police Department to make this event happen. According to Ross, County firefighters bring Santa to the streets to give children an experience that they may not have any other way. “A lady came up to me crying and thanking me because it was the first time her son had even seen Santa,” shares Ross. “I asked her how old her son was, and she said ‘12’.” Another memorable event happened when

a woman in her 40s approached a volunteer and asked if Santa could bring her a house for Christmas. Originally from Milwaukee, she explained that her son had been murdered two years ago, just two days before Christmas. With a lengthy trial process going on in Milwaukee, she decided to move to California to find a new job and start over. After moving and finding work, she suddenly lost her job, forcing her into financial hardship. At this time of year when all should be “merry and bright,” the sleigh is a way of responding to a need in the community.

Each year, donations are obtained by Ross and the Inglewood police officers months in advance to keep the tradition alive. “The cool thing is that we are not only doing a really good thing for the kids,” Ross says, “We are developing an ongoing positive relationship with our local police department as well.” This annual sleigh ride is made possible by volunteer efforts, including firefighters and their family and friends, Explorers, Inglewood Police Department officers and others.

Candle Safety

Candles are generally safe products, but unless they are used safely and watched carefully, they can lead to an accidental fire. More than 15,000 candle fires are reported annually. The Los Angeles County Fire Department reminds residents to be careful when burning candles, and to follow these rules for burning candles safely.



- Place candles in proper holders.
- Assure placement of candles are not close to curtains or furniture.
- Assure at least three feet between a candle and any surface above it.
- Keep clothes and hair away from flames.
- Keep children and pets away.
- Know the dangers of various types of candles.
- Extinguish candles before you leave a room.
- Never go to sleep with a candle still burning.
- Never leave a burning candle or oil burner in a child’s bedroom.
- Assure proper extinguishments of candles.
- Use a snuffer or a spoon to put them out.



Tips for Beating Holiday Blues

It's a time of celebration, parties, and get-togethers, but sometimes, the holiday season can be a source of the blues, especially for older people. Older adults may think about how quickly time has passed, or miss loved ones more during this time of year. Health conditions or concerns about money can also make it harder to enjoy the holidays. Fortunately, there are ways to help cope with the melancholy that may accompany the holidays and the AGS Foundation for Health in Aging offers the following tips:

If you feel blue, try to:

Get out and about: Ask family and friends to help with traveling to parties and events. Invite family and friends over.

Volunteer: Helping others is a great mood lifter. To volunteer contact your local United Way (it's listed in the phonebook or check www.unitedway.org); or call local schools, churches, synagogues or mosques and ask about volunteering opportunities in your neighborhood.

Limit the eggnog: Too much alcohol can lower your spirits.

Accept your feelings: There is nothing "wrong" with not feeling jolly; many people get the blues during the holidays.

Confide in someone: Talk about your feelings; it can help you understand why you feel the way you do.

Recognize warning signs of depression: Holiday blues are usually temporary and mild but depression is more serious and can linger unless you get help. Look for these signs:

- sadness that won't lift; loss of interest or pleasure
- changes in appetite or weight or sleeping a lot more or less than usual
- crying often
- feeling restless or tired all the time

- feeling worthless or helpless or guilty
- slowed thinking
- thoughts of death or suicide

Start the healing: If you're depressed, see your healthcare provider. Depression is very treatable.

If an older loved one has the blues or seems depressed:

Include them: Invite them out and to get-togethers. Take into account their needs for transportation or special diets.

Lend a hand: Offer help with shopping, and preparations for get-togethers in their homes.

Be a good listener: Encourage your loved one to talk about how he or she is feeling. Acknowledge "difficult" feelings, including a sense of loss if family or friends have died or moved away.

Encourage him or her to talk with a healthcare provider: Many older people don't realize when they're depressed, so if you suspect depression, you may need to bring it up more than once.

Let your loved one know depression is a medical illness and is nothing to be ashamed of.

ACCESS

1 (800) 854-7771

Department of Mental Health



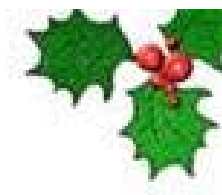
DHR mobile site:

<http://m.hr.lacounty.gov>

- Search for upcoming job opportunities
- Search for positions available throughout LA County
- Stay current with DHR news



Holiday Safety Tips



The holiday season is a joyful time, but also a chaotic one as people begin their holiday preparations. The American Red Cross has provided helpful holiday safety tips to help mitigate some of the stress in order to have a fun-filled season.

1. Always keep Christmas trees fresh in a durable stand, placed away from heat sources that might dry it, and water it daily.
2. If you are using lights to decorate outdoors, ensure that those lights are labeled for outdoor use and do not overload electrical outlets.
3. Prepare for holiday parties by decorating with flame-retardant or noncombustible materials. Also, prepare in advance for guests who might be smoking. Provide ashtrays and empty them frequently.
4. Designate a non-drinking driver if you are planning on attending a party. In addition, if you are hosting a gathering, provide non-alcoholic beverages for the designated drivers.
5. Buckle up when traveling and ensure that everyone in the vehicle is wearing safety belts. The holiday seasons are peak travel times and wearing a seat belt may prevent injury in a motor vehicle collision.
6. Be cautious with portable and space heaters, and place them at least three feet away from any combustibles, including wallpaper, clothes, beds, pets and people. Always turn space heaters off when you are not in the room or when you go to bed, and be sure everyone is aware that drying clothing over heaters is a fire hazard.

For additional holiday safety tips, visit the American Red Cross website at:
<http://www.redcrosslv.org/news/2000/holidaytips.html>.



Home Heating Tips

From Los Angeles County Fire Department



- Install smoke and carbon monoxide alarms near bedrooms and on each floor of your home.
- Make sure heating equipment is installed properly. Have a trained specialist or your local Gas Company inspector inspect and tune up your heating system each year.
- Keep portable space heaters at least three feet from anything that can burn, including bedding, furniture, and clothing.
- Always use a space heater that is equipped with automatic shutoff when tipped over.
- Keep children and pets away from space heaters.
- Have your fireplace chimney and flue inspected each year and cleaned if needed.
- Never use your range or oven to heat your home, even for a short time.



Rideshare L.A. County!

With the Holiday Season upon us, many will celebrate with family and friends in homes, public venues and other places of merriment.

Ridesharing is not just for going to work. Families who carpool are Ridesharing.

Los Angeles County's Metro system runs all trains and the Orange Line bus until 2 a.m. on Friday and Saturday nights. That makes going to public venues safer.

From all of us at Rideshare L.A. County, we wish you a safe and holiday season!

FoundAnimals PRESENTS
Twelve Pets
of
Christmas

Give a pet a home this holiday season!
\$30 off cats & \$40 off dogs*
Coupon available at
www.foundanimals.org/12pets

* Discounted adoption fees for eligible pets at participating locations with coupon

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
www.laanimalservices.com

NORTH CENTRAL
3201 Lacy Street, Los Angeles CA 90031

SOUTH LOS ANGELES
3621 11th Avenue, Los Angeles CA 90018

WEST LOS ANGELES
11361 W. Pico Boulevard, Los Angeles CA 90064

EAST VALLEY
14409 Vanowen Street, Van Nuys CA 91405

WEST VALLEY
20655 Plummer Street, Chatsworth CA 91311

HARBOR
957 N. Gaffey Street, San Pedro CA 90731

LONG BEACH ANIMAL CARE SERVICES
7700 E. Spring St., Long Beach CA 90815

spcaLA
7700 E. Spring St., Long Beach CA 90815

spcaLA SOUTH BAY PET ADOPTION CENTER
12910 Yukon Avenue Hawthorne, CA 90250

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
www.animalcare.lacounty.gov

AGOURA
29525 W. Agoura Road, Agoura CA 91301

BALDWIN PARK
4275 N. Elton Avenue, Baldwin Park CA 91706

CARSON
216 W. Victoria Street, Gardena CA 90248

CASTAIC
31044 N. Charlie Canyon Road, Castaic CA 91384

DOWNEY
11258 S. Garfield Avenue, Downey CA 90242

LANCASTER
5210 W. Avenue I, Lancaster CA 93536

ADOPT & SHOP
353 Lakewood Center Mall Lakewood, CA 90712

SEAACA / Cat Adoption Center
9777 SEAACA St., Downey CA 90241

For more information visit:
www.foundanimals.org

events@foundanimals.org | (877) 580-PETS



Spirit on Display at Care Harbor Event



Long Beach Comprehensive Health Center Pharmacy staff prepare boxes of prepackaged medications for Care Harbor event

The line that circled around the building before dawn could have been mistaken for eager Christmas shoppers camping out for a big screen TV or holiday bargain. They were young and old, from every background, and from every part of the County. But the lines of wheelchairs and walkers suggested this was no ordinary shopping event. They were there in search of a gift, the gift of good health.

Over four days in September, more than 4,000 people lined up to receive free health care at the massive Care Harbor event staged at the Los Angeles Sports Arena. The annual event has become a familiar and poignant reminder of the tens of thousands of County residents who are unable to receive regular health care because they have no insurance, few means, or both.

Participants lined up in droves for eyeglasses, mammograms, immunizations, and dental work. Some were diabetic, or battled cancer and heart disease. Many had postponed care altogether or stopped taking their medications because they could not afford them. Most had a diagnosed or undiagnosed ailment requiring attention.

“This event brings into focus the tremendous unmet need in Los Angeles County for basic health care,” says consultant and Care Harbor board member Carol Meyer, who helped coordinate the involvement of the Department of Health

Services (DHS), which provided teams of clinical staff, interpreters, prescription drugs, and medical supplies.

For those needing ongoing care, DHS volunteers were on hand to provide linkages to community clinics and services. One woman showed up complaining of stomach pain and was diagnosed with a large abdominal mass. Health Services providers were able to schedule surgery at Olive View-UCLA Medical Center for her within days.

DHS volunteers also signed up eligible participants for coverage programs like Healthy Way L.A., which provides medical coverage and other benefits for low income, uninsured adults between 19 and 64 years old. Pharmacists and technicians from the Long Beach Comprehensive Health Center packaged thousands of bottles of medications for the event, and DHS interpreters provided essential translation services.

An estimated 50 million Americans live without health care. Having no or inadequate health insurance often means that people will postpone necessary care and forego preventive care. Because the uninsured and underinsured frequently have no regular doctor and limited access to prescription medications, they are more likely to be hospitalized for health conditions that could be avoided. With thousands of people under one roof, organizers use the event to provide valuable prevention and wellness information geared to underserved communities.

Event organizers say early diagnosis and intervention allows patients to be treated before diseases reach a critical and costly phase that overloads community resources. Correcting vision and dental problems can increase employability, and the volume of free care delivered at the clinic reduces the impact on area Emergency Rooms and wait times for emergency care.

Care Harbor is made possible by the generosity and participation of supporters, including medical and dental schools, hospitals and clinics, professional organizations, foundations, government agencies, corporations and private individuals. In addition to funding from Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, other major financial sponsors for this year’s event included L.A. Care and Dignity Health. To volunteer, visit www.careharbor.org.

WeTip
WELFARE FRAUD
1 (800) 87-FRAUD

Retirees

Congratulations to the following employees who are joining the ranks of the retired after their many years of service to the County of Los Angeles:

45+ Years

CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES: Judson Tutwiler
HEALTH SERVICES: Anne P. Randolph, Wanda C. Wright

40+ Years

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICE: Denise Fiore, Betty Gobst
CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES: Brynda J. Thomas
FIRE: Royce R. Crowder, James C. Ealey
HEALTH SERVICES: Dorothy L. Birotte, Maria R. Cruz, Charles Doakes, Connie M. Guarderas, Carol G. Hutchins, Paula M. Wauls
PUBLIC HEALTH: Beverly J. Fountain
PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES: Flora J. Green
SHERIFF: Michael P. Borghese, Donell Jenkins
TREASURER & TAX COLLECTOR: Bonnie Towns

30+ Years

ASSESSOR: Violeta S. Gemeniano
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICE: Georgina A. Villegas
CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES: John F. Barger, Rosemary Winkfield
CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES: Paul Che, Jana Giles
DISTRICT ATTORNEY: Melody Che
FIRE: Richard C. Creighton, Thomas Dutton, Tracy E. Ertel, Anthony J. Iacono, Craig G. Ibanez, Ron G. McFadden, Sylvia Morales, Michael N. Neville, Henry N. Wong
HEALTH SERVICES: Dorothy Boone, Roy C. Colson Jr., William Colucci, Jacquelyn B. Conley-Ezell, Rose A. Davison, Delores F. Harper, Terry J. Linehan, Terry L. Mc Swain, Sandra Montoya, Richard J. Pugel, Meelieng M. Tan, Sandra Teasley
INTERNAL SERVICES: Rosa M. James
MENTAL HEALTH: Carol Bullard, Soon H. Chung, Erwin C. Cross Jr.
PROBATION: Geryis M. Al Hamd, Robert L. Anderson, Charles C. Haftarczyk, Joseph R. Salgado
PUBLIC DEFENDER: Alan J. Gelfand
PUBLIC HEALTH: Beverly A. Walton
SHERIFF: Arthur A. Andrade, Jose L. Chavez Jr., Donald A. Colca, Michael A. Duggan, James Gonzales, John R. Larson, Thomas G. Martin, Tommy D. Martinez, Guadalupe V. Ortiz, Agustin E. Pando, Steven M. Roller, Lawrence E. Swanson, Ray H. Walker III

SUPERIOR COURT: Sammie J. Benson
TREASURER & TAX COLLECTOR: Ilse E. Hipfel

25+ Years

CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES: Lien N. Do
CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES: Robbie L. Caldwell, Thelidria Calhoun, Cinderetha M. Clay, Marita E. Lane, Anne R. Williams
DISTRICT ATTORNEY: William F. Penzin
FIRE: Joel Gitelson
HEALTH SERVICES: Estrella R. Tanap
PROBATION: Karen M. King, Sharon C. Williams
PUBLIC HEALTH: Emerita C. Gendrano, Beverly Sesay, Betty Villalon, Dante D. Vitalez
PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES: Angela R. Perez
PUBLIC WORKS: Robert J. Johnson, Karen L. Wong
SHERIFF: Yolanda R. Astorga, Victor A. Clay
SUPERIOR COURT: Cheryle M. Potter, Patricia C. Sweet

Metro Employee Discounts

metro.net/discounts

The Gift That Keeps on Giving

On November 7, 2012, the Board of Supervisors approved a motion to establish a cross-promotional partnership between the County and the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) to extend Metro's Destination Discounts Program to County employees as part of the County's Employee Discount Program.

The Metro Destination Discounts Program is a cross-promotional barter program where Metro provides local businesses or events (promotional partners) with promotional advertising for their business or events, in designated Metro promotional materials. In return, the business or events provides Metro employees, and riders with a discount or added value opportunity. Many of the discounts for these businesses or events are found along Metro's transit, bus or light rail lines. As such, County employees are able to experience the comfort and ease of using Metro lines to access these discounts, if they choose.

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Buyer Beware Program

Weights and Measures Officials Remind Shoppers to Check Their Receipts

With the holiday shopping rush, Weights and Measures officials remind shoppers to check their store receipts for accuracy. Shoppers should expect, and are legally entitled, to pay only a store's lowest advertised or posted price for any item. Routine inspections reveal that overcharge errors do occur and often involve items with special promotional offers, "sales," and markdowns for which price information has not been updated in the scanner system. Holiday shopping presents many opportunities for such errors.

Overcharges can be easily missed. Consumers are encouraged to monitor prices charged at the checkout register and to report errors to the manager or customer service desk before leaving the store. Shoppers who are overcharged should contact the Department of Agricultural Commissioner/Weights and Measures at (800) 665-2900 or may submit a complaint by logging on to <http://acwm.lacounty.gov/scripts/scanform.cfm>.

All complaints will be investigated the same day received or the next business day. It is not necessary to send receipts. Callers should be prepared to provide the following information:

- a complete description of the item or items
- the shelf price or advertised price
- the price scanned at the checkout register
- the date the overcharge occurred.

The Buyer Beware Program was established in February 2002 after a sampling of price accuracy at stores throughout Los Angeles County revealed that overcharges occurred at two-thirds of the locations. The program requires all stores with automated price look-up systems to register with the Department of Agricultural Commissioner/Weights and Measures and provides for routine inspections of stores to monitor price accuracy. Since implementation of the program, price accuracy has improved significantly. This was achieved through stringent enforcement by undercover inspectors, and an increased awareness by retailers to achieve compliance. Consumers, though, need to remain alert to potential pricing errors.

METRO

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County employees must show their County identification badge to take advantage of the Metro Destination Discounts. This program features local places to eat, shop, and play when you take public transportation or show your County identification badge. There are more than 200 Metro Destination Discounts offerings currently and additional opportunities are featured on Metro's website weekly. The promotion and discount categories include attractions, sports, retail, theaters, museums, and travel. These special discounts will allow County employees to engage in family fun events and celebrate special occasions that otherwise might not be affordable.

The numerous vendor partnerships offered by Metro will greatly benefit County employees and their families by providing reasonably priced admissions to events, discounts on meals, and allow opportunities for employees to purchase inexpensive tickets to enjoy Countywide venues. Check out all Destination Discounts and special offers at www.metro.net/discounts.

One of the featured Destination Discounts events is Disney on Ice, which is appearing at the Honda Center from December 18 – 23, 2012; Citizens Business Bank Arena from December 26 – 30, 2012; and the Long Beach Arena from January 3 – 6, 2013.

County employees can save \$5 on tickets to select performances (excluding front row and VIP seats) subject to ticket availability. In addition, Metro is providing a complimentary voucher to see a weekday performance to the first 75 County employees that show an employee ID and proof of a valid Metro Tap Card. The voucher needs to be redeemed in person at the box office days before the preferred show. This additional offer is only applicable for shows between December 13, 2012 through January 6, 2013. For more details on how to obtain your complimentary voucher to a weekday performance of Disney on Ice, please visit www.rideshare.lacounty.gov for details.



All About Us

Employees of the County of Los Angeles

LA COUNTY STARS!



November 2012

Office of County Investigations Team Workforce Excellence

Jeffrey Albert ♦ Hsiao Alonso ♦ Bryan Bell ♦ Justin Cheng ♦ Jesse Conde ♦ Joshua Day ♦ Scott Harvey
Nina Kin ♦ Russell Lingo ♦ Morteza Mostafavi ♦ Maria Santana ♦ Alysa Serdengeecti ♦ Robert Smythe ♦ Guy Zelenski
Department of Auditor-Controller

The Office of County Investigations created an Association of County Investigations (ACI) to bring together County employees in investigative services to share and improve their knowledge in their chosen field. ACI has over 100 members and affiliates. Their professional growth serves to strengthen our operational oversight which contributes to an enhanced County efficiency, and elevates the confidence that our communities, constituents and taxpayers have in County transparency and accountability.

LA COUNTY STARS! serves to recognize employee performance reflective of the County's mission statement and values. Under **LA COUNTY STARS!**, Board staff, management and non-management employees, individuals, and teams may be recognized. Board Chiefs of Staff, Deputy Chief Executive Officers, Department Heads, and Chief Deputies are not eligible to be nominated.

For more information, please contact the Department of Human Resources at (213) 893-7810 or visit the Web site at <http://stars.lacounty.gov/>.

Carbon Monoxide Safety Tips

From Los Angeles County Fire Department

What is Carbon Monoxide?

Carbon Monoxide is a colorless, odorless, tasteless gas that is formed when carbon-based fuels, such as kerosene, gasoline, propane, natural gas, oil, charcoal or wood, are burned with inadequate amounts of oxygen. This can be caused by improper installation, maintenance, misuse, or failure of home gas appliances, as well as a lack of proper ventilation.

Warning Signs of Carbon Monoxide include:

- A large, yellow and unsteady gas appliance burner flame (with the exception of decorative gas log appliances).
- An unusual, pungent odor when the appliance is operating.

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

The early stages of carbon monoxide poisoning produce flu-like symptoms such as headache, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, shortness of breath, and mental confusion. Carbon monoxide displaces oxygen in the blood. Prolonged exposure can lead to death by asphyxiation.

CAUTION: Non-vented gas heaters are unsafe and not approved for homes

- Poor operation can result in an accumulation of hazardous fumes.
- Unless a room heater has enough air from an outside vent or an open window, the oxygen in a room can be used up, resulting in illness or death.
- If the flames are not fully covered, they could result in fires.
- Never use your oven or range with non-vented gas heaters.
- Never use your outdoor barbeque indoors.

Carbon Monoxide Home Alarms

- Provide an extra level of safety.
- Require routine maintenance and the replacement of alarms every three to five years.
- Regular gas appliance maintenance is still required.
- Inspection and routine maintenance are still the best defense against accidental carbon monoxide poisoning from gas appliances.

What to do if you suspect Carbon Monoxide is present in your home

- Immediately turn off and stop using the suspected gas appliance.
- Seek medical attention if anyone in the home experiences possible carbon monoxide poisoning symptoms.

- Contact the Gas Company or a licensed heating contractor or plumber immediately to have appliances inspected, serviced and determined to be safe.
- Gas appliance maintenance is the homeowner's responsibility.

New Series of Property Tax Assessment Seminars Set

The County of Los Angeles is sponsoring a series of free seminars during January, February and March 2013 to assist property owners who feel their taxes should be lowered due to a decline in the value of their property.

The 90-minute seminar will be offered three times at various locations: Culver City, Glendale, and El Monte.

The seminar is intended to help taxpayers better understand the assessment appeals process, which many find confusing. It will be of value to homeowners who are interested in learning about the assessment appeals process and to those who have already filed an appeal. The seminar will cover taxpayers appeal rights and when to file an application for reduction in assessment. It will also cover how to prepare for a hearing, what qualifies as admissible evidence, what will happen at the hearing and what to expect after the hearing.

The dates, time and locations of the sessions are:

Culver City—Julian Dixon Library, 4975 Overland Avenue, Thursday, January 10, 2013, 10 a.m. Free parking behind the library.

Glendale—Public Library, 222 E. Harvard Street, Wednesday, February 13, 2013, 10 a.m. The library will validate three hours parking at the corner of Maryland and Harvard.

El Monte—Jack Crippen Senior Center, Crafts Room, 3120 N. Tyler Avenue, Thursday, March 21, 2013, 10 a.m. Free parking.

Persons with disabilities who believe they need reasonable accommodation in order to attend the seminar may call (213) 974-7953 or (800) 735-2922 (TDD). Schedules for seminars may be obtained by calling (213) 974-7953 or by visiting <https://lacaab.lacounty.gov/PubEdProg.aspx>.

Doing Last-Minute Shopping This Holiday Season?

Do It Wisely

It's the last few days before the big holiday and you still have plenty of shopping to do. Don't worry, you're not alone.

You're really, really not alone.

In fact, Black Friday is not the biggest shopping day of the year. The busiest day is typically the final Saturday before Christmas. That's December 22 this year.

So, if you still need to shop, Consumer Affairs offers these Top 9 tips before last-minute shopping. Why 9? Time is short. No time for 10. Let's go!

1. Set a budget and a plan

Before you step into a store or fire up your computer, prepare a holiday budget. Paying with cash for regular, small purchases will help you stick to your budget. Try to plan your purchases in advance. Don't get stuck going store to store in rush-hour shopping traffic.

2. Check for any remaining sale prices

Let's face it: you probably missed the best sale prices of the season. However, some sales last a long time so check your receipt before you leave the cash register. Make sure they did not [charge](#) you the regular price.

3. Or, just wait until the after-Christmas sales

You've waited this long, so if you happen to exchange gifts after Christmas Day, look for the clearance sales once the holiday has passed. While you're there, stock up on holiday-specific items like cards and wrapping paper so you're ahead of the game for next year.

4. Use a credit card and do it wisely

If you pay with a credit card, use just one. If possible, use a credit card instead of a debit card, especially for large purchases. If you pay by credit card, you get legal protections if you don't receive what you ordered or if products are defective. Know the terms of your [credit card](#) agreement.

5. Get your R&R – refunds and receipts

Check for a store's [refund](#) policies or ask about them before you buy. Some stores offer a full refund; others offer only a store credit or no refund at all. Save your receipts and ask for gift receipts. You or the person getting your gifts will need them for returns and exchanges.

6. Read the fine print

If you're making a big purchase, read the [contract](#) and understand it before you sign. Check the interest rate and the total cost of the item including interest. Make sure you can afford the total price.

7. Consider cash instead of gift cards

Many last-minute shoppers will turn to gift cards. However, U.S. consumers waste about \$10 billion every year in unused gift cards. Gift cards are convenient and seem slightly more personal than cash. But would you ever be disappointed with a 10-, 20- or 100-dollar bill instead of some gift card? Neither would they.

8. Stay secure online

When buying [online](#), make sure the website is secure before entering your personal or financial information. Secure websites begin with "https://" rather than just "http://." They also display a locked padlock on the screen.

9. Pay close attention to shipping deadlines

Most online retailers will offer different shipping methods and costs. You can often pay an extra charge to get your products quickly. Many websites will tell you an exact date when you need to buy in order to get your gift on time. Pay attention to those dates, track your shipping and if necessary, leave a note for the delivery person to make sure you get what you need when you need it.

For more consumer information, go to the Consumer Affairs website at dca.lacounty.gov or call (800) 593-8222.

